

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Easement application for the installation of a buried fiber optic cable to serve toll and distribution facilities and services in the proposed construction areas.

Proposed Implementation Date: Spring/Summer 2012

Proponent: Northern Telephone Cooperative, Inc., PO Box 190, Sunburst, MT 59482

Location: See below list of tracts.

County: Liberty

Trust: Common Schools (CS)

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Northern Telephone Cooperative, Inc. has requested to install a buried fiber optic cable to serve toll and distribution facilities and services across three tracts of state land. The proposed easement route is located along Flat Coulee Road in Sections 11 & 12, T37N, R4E and in Section 8, T37N, R5E. The fiber optic cable will be buried 42" deep and will be installed using a static plow.

Township	Range	Section	Fiber Optic Cable Location	Acres Affected	Trust
37N	4E	11	S2SE4	1.303	CS
37N	4E	12	SW4, SW4NE4	1.451	CS
37N	5E	8	NE4SW4, NW4SE4	0.684	CS
TOTALS				3.438	CS

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Northern Telephone Cooperative, Inc.-Proponent

DNRC-Surface Owner

James and Marlene Grammar-Surface Lessee, Lease #6205 and #10214

Rick Belcher-Surface Lessee, Lease #10075

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny Northern Telephone Cooperative, Inc. the requested easement and permission to install the buried fiber optic cable.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant Northern Telephone Cooperative, Inc. the requested easement and permission to install the buried fiber optic cable.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

Soils at the proposed project sites are silty to clayey in texture. The topography is gently rolling and the fiber optic cable will be installed along an existing road. The soils and slopes are generally suitable for the installation of the buried fiber optic cable. Equipment will cause localized areas of soil compaction and will disturb the soil where the buried fiber optic cable is being placed. Reclamation requirements are to compact and level the plow scar created in the installation of the buried fiber optic cable. Then seed the impacted area as required with the existing grass types and seeding rates that are listed in item 7 of this assessment. Cumulative impacts on soil resources are not expected as the use of a static plow will minimize the surface disturbance caused by the construction project.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

There are numerous documented and/or recorded water rights associated with the proposed project area. These water rights will not be impacted as the cable will be buried 42" below the surface and minimal surface disturbance will occur by the utilization of a static plow for the installation of the buried fiber optic cable. Other water quality and/or quantity issues will not be impacted by the proposed action.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

The proposed action will not impact the air quality.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Vegetation will be minimally impacted as 1.42 miles of buried fiber optic cable will be installed by the utilization of a static plow. The vegetation consists of primarily native rangeland with a few areas of tame grass species. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction areas are a concern, but this concern will be mitigated as the applicants are responsible for controlling weeds within the construction areas. Cumulative impacts on the vegetative resources are not expected as the proposed construction areas will be reclaimed and reseeded. The reseeding mixture will consist of a grass seed mixture of 35% Western Wheatgrass, 35% Slender Wheatgrass, 15% Bluebunch Wheatgrass, 10% Green Needlegrass, and 5% Lewis Blue Flax. If drilled the rate will be 8#/acre, but if broadcast seeded the rate will be 16#/acre.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for T37N, R4E: There was one species of concern and zero potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey: Flowering Plants-Long-sheath Waterweed. The proposed project area has been previously disturbed in road construction and does not contain this species in the proposed project area.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for T37N, R5E: A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were no plant species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, these tracts provide habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. Wildlife usage is expected to return to "normal" (pre-action usage) following the installation of the buried fiber optic cable. The proposed action will not have long-term negative effects on existing wildlife species and/or wildlife habitat.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

There are no threatened or endangered species, sensitive habitat types, or other species of special concern associated with the proposed project area. At this time, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for T37N, R4E: There were one species of concern and one potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey: Birds-Swainson's hawk. Invertebrates-Gray Comma. This particular tract of native rangeland does not contain many, if any of these species. If any are present, they will be dispersed into the surrounding permanent cover and return to the project area once it is completed.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for T37N, R5E: A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were no animal species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

The proposed project areas are adjacent to and follow an existing county road. These areas have been previously reviewed inspected by DNRC for archaeological resources. No cultural resources were found within the project area, and therefore cultural resources will not be impacted by this proposed project. A review of TLMS indicated no cultural resources reports for these tracts.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

Installation of the buried fiber optic cable will not affect the aesthetics of the land in any way as it will not be visible. It will lead to no erosion of the soil resources on the tracts as the line is located below the soil surface.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. The proposed action will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tract listed on this EA.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.</i>• <i>Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.</i>• <i>Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.</i>

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

The proposed project will not change human safety in the area.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The results of this project will not affect the industrial, commercial, or agricultural activities or production in the area.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

This project will not create any new jobs, as the project will be completed in house by the proponent.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The proposed action will add to the tax revenue.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

This project is of a small scale and being funded by Northern Telephone Cooperative, Inc. There will be no excessive stress placed on the existing infrastructure of the area.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The proposed action is in compliance with State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

This proposed project areas are next to Flat Coulee Road which generally has low recreational value. The tracts are legally accessible and the proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational and wilderness activities on these state tracts.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness or diversity of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

This project will benefit the school trust in terms of the \$50.00 fee generated from each of the 3 easement applications for a total of \$150.00. The easement on the Common Schools trust land will affect 3.438 acres X \$300.00 per acre equals \$1,031.40 of revenue generated from the future easements. Cumulative impacts are not likely as the area is used for grazing and the buried fiber optic cable will not affect the long-term viability of grazing on these tracts.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Tony Nickol	Date: March 30, 2012
	Title: Land Use Specialist, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

V. FINDINGS

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant Northern Telephone Cooperative, Inc. the requested easement and permission to install the buried fiber optic cable.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

The applicant is applying for easements to cross 3 parcels of state land (3.438 acres) with a buried fiber optic cable. This project will provide “state of the art” fiber optics connections to rural residents in the area. Easement routes are adjacent to existing county roads. No archaeological features have been identified within the project area. Disturbed areas of grazing land will be reclaimed and reseeded in accordance with specifications outlined in this EA. The surface lessee’s have been notified and actual damages have been settled. Significant impacts are not anticipated as a result of the selected alternative.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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EIS

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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

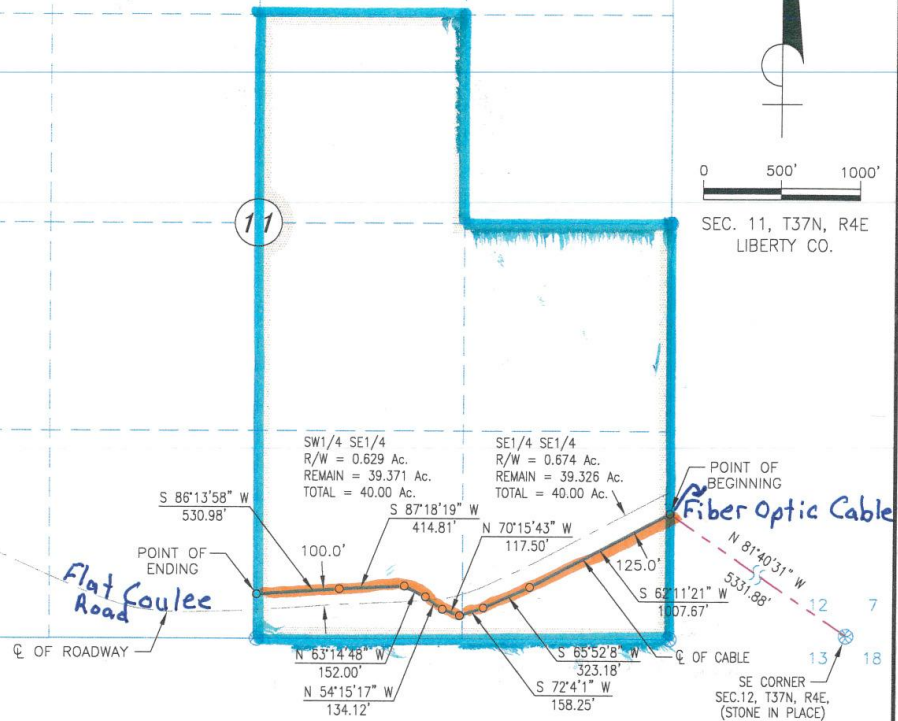
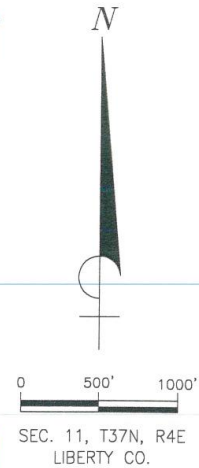
EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Erik Eneboe
	Title: Conrad Unit Manger, CLO, DNRC
Signature:  Date: April 2, 2012	

NOTE: ALL BEARINGS AND DISTANCES ON SECTION ARE TAKEN FROM FIELD GPS SURVEY DATA CORRECTED IN SYSTEM: UTM, ZONE: 12 NORTH, DATUM: NAD 1927 (WESTERN US).

STATE OF MONTANA

-- SW1/4 NE1/4 --
-- SE1/4 --

LESSEE: SE1/4
JAMES GRAMMAR,
MARLENE GRAMMAR
1220 FLAT COULEE ROAD
CHESTER, MT 59522
LEASE NUMBER 10214

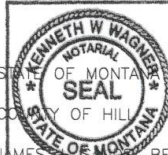


DESCRIPTION

A RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR AN UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABLE EXTENDING 10.0 FEET ON EACH SIDE OF A CENTERLINE ALL WITHIN THE S1/2 SE1/4 OF SECTION 11, TOWNSHIP 37 NORTH, RANGE 4 EAST OF THE PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, MONTANA, AND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

COMMENCING AT THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SECTION 12, TOWNSHIP 37 NORTH, RANGE 4 EAST; THENCE NORTH 81°40'31" WEST A DISTANCE OF 5331.88 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE AND EAST BOUNDARY OF THE SE1/4 SE1/4 OF SAID SECTION 11; THENCE ON AND ALONG THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE ON A BEARING OF SOUTH 62°11'21" WEST A DISTANCE OF 1007.67 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 65°52'8" WEST A DISTANCE OF 323.18 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 72°4'1" WEST A DISTANCE OF 158.25 FEET; THENCE NORTH 70°15'43" WEST A DISTANCE OF 117.50 FEET; THENCE NORTH 54°15'17" WEST A DISTANCE OF 134.12 FEET; THENCE NORTH 63°14'48" WEST A DISTANCE OF 152.00 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 87°18'19" WEST A DISTANCE OF 414.81 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 86°13'58" WEST A DISTANCE OF 530.98 FEET TO THE POINT OF ENDING OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE AND WEST BOUNDARY OF THE SW1/4 SE1/4 OF SAID SECTION 11 WHICH LIES NORTH 88°10'5" WEST A DISTANCE OF 7915.88 FEET FROM THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SECTION 12, TOWNSHIP 37 NORTH, RANGE 4 EAST.

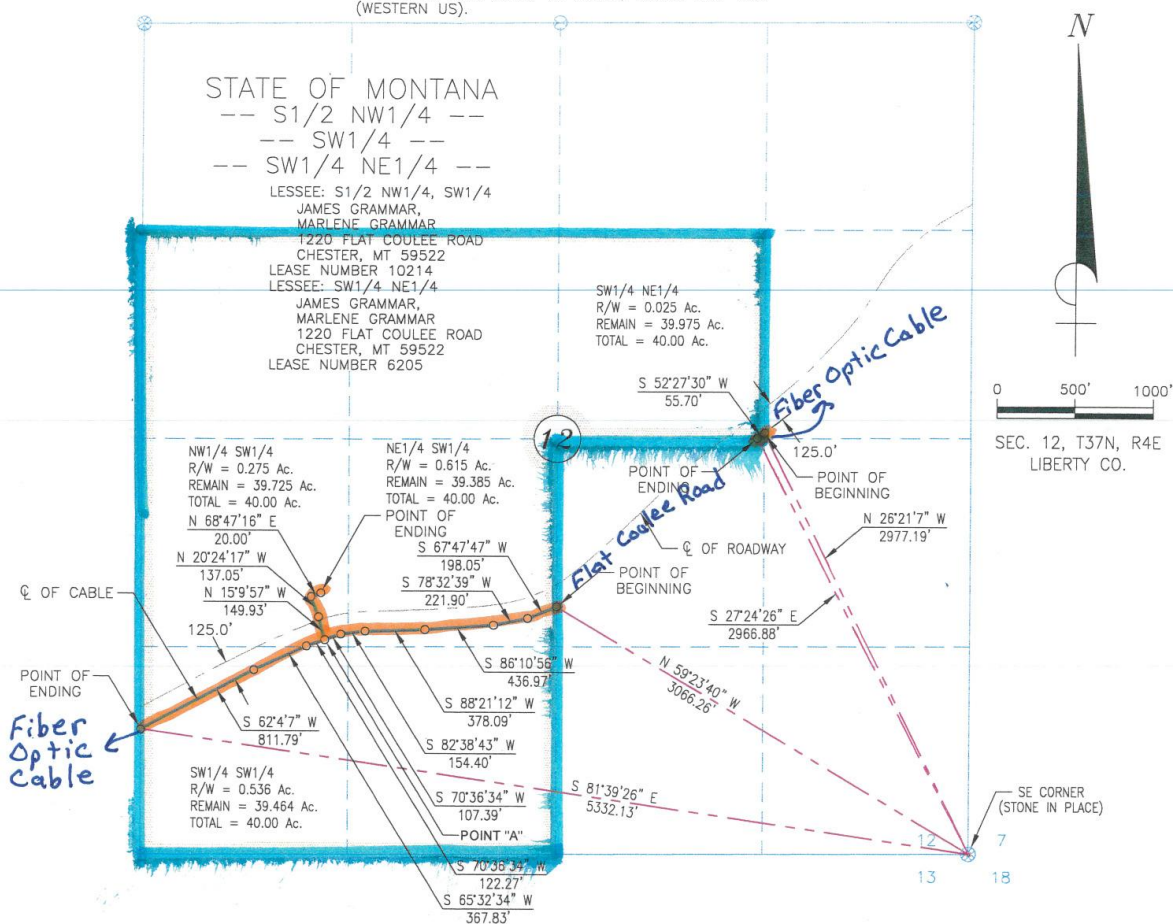
CONTAINED WITHIN THE ABOVE DESCRIBED NEW CONSTRUCTION RIGHT-OF-WAY IS 1.303 ACRES MORE OR LESS.



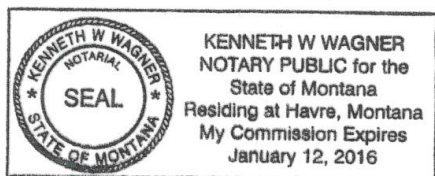
KENNETH W WAGNER
NOTARY PUBLIC for the AFFIDAVIT
State of Montana
Residing at Havre, Montana
My Commission Expires
January 12, 2016

JAMES GRAMMAR, BEING DULY SWORN, SAYS, THAT HE IS THE CONSULTING ENGINEER FOR CENTRAL MONTANA COMMUNICATIONS, INC., WHOSE PRINCIPAL OFFICE IS LOCATED AT HAVRE, MONTANA; THAT THE ABOVE PLAT AND DESCRIPTION WAS PREPARED UNDER HIS SUPERVISION FROM AN ACCURATE SURVEY OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE BY SURVEY CREWS UNDER HIS SUPERVISION. THE ABOVE PLAT CORRECTLY SHOWS THE QUANTITY OF LAND REQUIRED FOR THE RIGHT-OF-WAY IN EACH FORTY-ACRE TRACT AND ALSO THE AMOUNT OF LAND REMAINING IN EACH PORTION OF SUCH FORTY-ACRE TRACT.

NOTE: ALL BEARINGS AND DISTANCES ON SECTION ARE
TAKEN FROM FIELD GPS SURVEY DATA CORRECTED
IN SYSTEM: UTM, ZONE: 12 NORTH, DATUM: NAD 1927
(WESTERN US).



DESCRIPTION
SEE SHEET 2

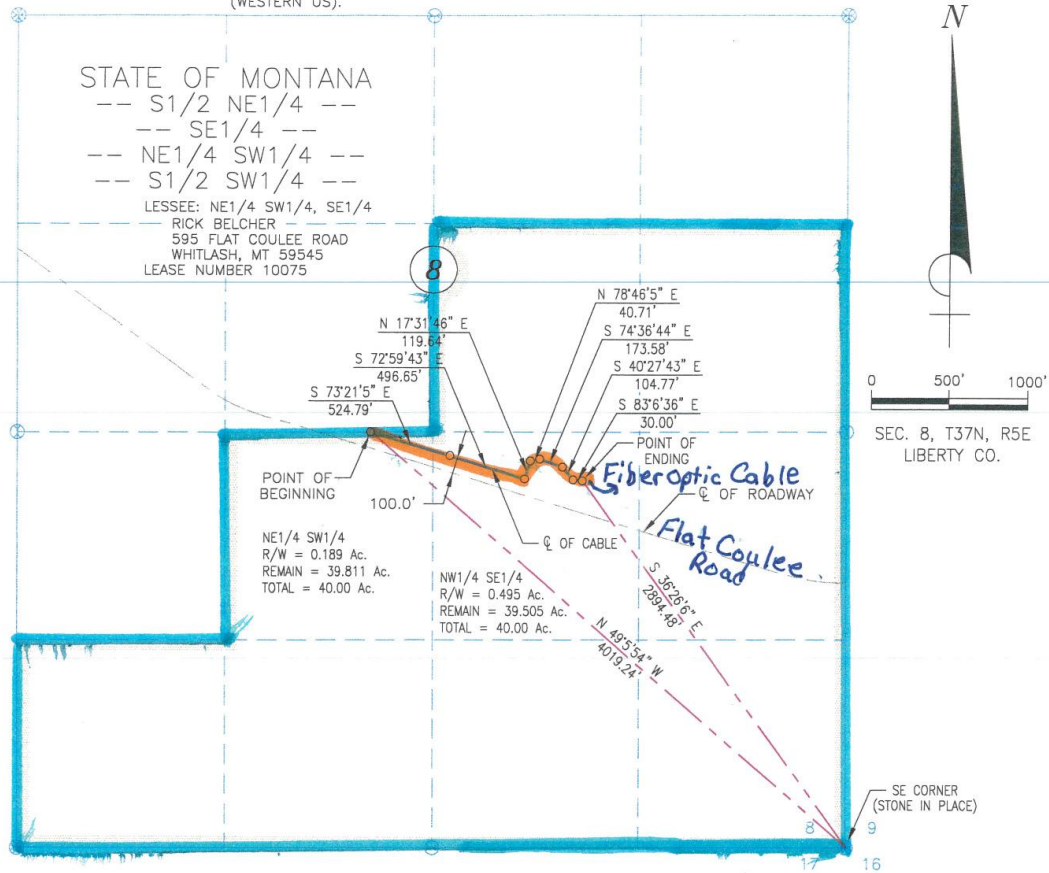


AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MONTANA)
COUNTY OF HILL) SS

JAMES J. SANDS, BEING DULY SWORN, SAYS, THAT HE IS THE CONSULTING ENGINEER FOR CENTRAL MONTANA COMMUNICATIONS, INC., WHOSE PRINCIPAL OFFICE IS LOCATED AT HAVRE, MONTANA; THAT THE ABOVE PLAT AND DESCRIPTION WAS PREPARED UNDER HIS SUPERVISION FROM AN ACCURATE SURVEY OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTER-LINE BY SURVEY CREWS UNDER HIS SUPERVISION. THE ABOVE PLAT CORRECTLY SHOWS THE QUANTITY OF LAND REQUIRED FOR THE RIGHT-OF-WAY IN EACH FORTY-ACRE TRACT AND ALSO THE AMOUNT OF LAND REMAINING IN EACH PORTION OF SUCH FORTY-ACRE TRACT.

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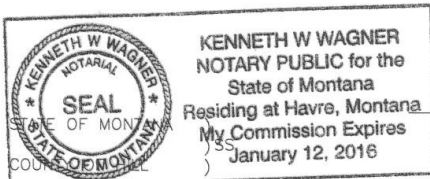


DESCRIPTION

A RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR AN UNDERGROUND TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABLE EXTENDING 10.0 FEET ON EACH SIDE OF A CENTERLINE ALL WITHIN THE NE1/4 SW1/4 AND THE NW1/4 SE1/4 OF SECTION 8, TOWNSHIP 37 NORTH, RANGE 5 EAST OF THE PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, MONTANA, AND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

COMMENCING AT THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SAID SECTION 8; THENCE NORTH 49°5'54\" WEST A DISTANCE OF 4019.24 FEET TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE AND NORTH BOUNDARY OF THE NE1/4 SW1/4 OF SAID SECTION 8; THENCE ON AND ALONG THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE ON A BEARING OF SOUTH 73°21'5\" EAST A DISTANCE OF 524.79 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 72°59'43\" EAST A DISTANCE OF 496.65 FEET; THENCE NORTH 17°31'46\" EAST A DISTANCE OF 119.64 FEET; THENCE NORTH 78°46'5\" EAST A DISTANCE OF 40.71 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 74°36'44\" EAST A DISTANCE OF 173.58 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 40°27'43\" EAST A DISTANCE OF 104.77 FEET; THENCE SOUTH 83°6'36\" EAST A DISTANCE OF 30.00 FEET TO THE POINT OF ENDING OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE; THENCE SOUTH 36°26'6\" EAST A DISTANCE OF 2894.48 FEET TO THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SAID SECTION 8.

CONTAINED WITHIN THE ABOVE DESCRIBED NEW CONSTRUCTION RIGHT-OF-WAY IS 0.684 ACRES MORE OR LESS.



AFFIDAVIT

JAMES J. SANDS, BEING DULY SWORN, SAYS, THAT HE IS THE CONSULTING ENGINEER FOR CENTRAL MONTANA COMMUNICATIONS, INC., WHOSE PRINCIPAL OFFICE IS LOCATED AT HAVRE, MONTANA; THAT THE ABOVE PLAT AND DESCRIPTION WAS PREPARED UNDER HIS SUPERVISION FROM AN ACCURATE SURVEY OF THE RIGHT-OF-WAY CENTERLINE BY SURVEY CREWS UNDER HIS SUPERVISION. THE ABOVE PLAT CORRECTLY SHOWS THE QUANTITY OF LAND REQUIRED FOR THE RIGHT-OF-WAY IN EACH FORTY-ACRE TRACT AND ALSO THE AMOUNT OF LAND REMAINING IN